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Strada: A City-Centric Digital Magazine on Florence, Italy

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**Strada: A City-Centric Digital Magazine
on Florence, Italy**

A Capstone Project Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements of the Renée Crown University Honors Program at
Syracuse University

Gabriela Riccardi
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and Renée Crown University Honors
May 2015

Honors Capstone Project in Magazine

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Honors Director: Stephen Kuusisto, Director

Date: April 22, 2015

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Abstract

More than 45 American university and colleges run programs in Florence, Italy, translating to more than one student center per square mile of the city. And the young American presence is apparent in Firenze. Students fill the city center, flock together in coffee shops, flow in and out of markets and museums and discoteques. But from this stronghold springs an Florentine catering to Americanism: there are restaurants that will speak English rather than Italian, shops that will sell American labels from home, and piazzas that are bustling not with young Italians, but students from the States. It can be remarkably easy to slip along this surface of Florence, as it is the face first presented to those who speak with American accents.

This prototypical issue of *Strada (Street)*, a travel magazine designed for Americans studying in Italy, serves to pull back another level of Florence and its culture for abroad students. Created exclusively for interactive use on the tablet, the digital magazine is unrestrained by the bounds of mailing subscriptions, airline luggage weight limits, and transatlantic trekking. It aims to draw students into a more intimate, authentic Florence. By pushing readers to quiet neighborhoods and away from the major tourist tracks, the magazine compels students to unlock more insight into aspects of the Florentine way of life. And with early discovery, they can maximize their time in growing this understanding to become *fiorentini* in their own right.

While the magazine is conceptualized to capture study abroad in Italy as a whole, each issue focuses on a new city where Americans spend their semesters. The May 2015 issue (“Buongiorno, Firenze!”) was developed from my four months living and learning in Florence.

The magazine can be accessed by downloading the [Best of Newhouse app](#) for the iPad. A demonstrative video of its features can also be found at <https://vimeo.com/125647008>. And a non-interactive version can be found at http://issuu.com/gabrielariccardi/docs/strada_may_2015_pdf_/1.

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Executive Summary

Strada is a city-centric tablet magazine that serves as a guide to American students living abroad in Italy, and its May 2015 issue focuses specifically on Florence. With sections that detail a cultural introduction, food, art, shopping, and memories, the digital publication aims to guide readers away from the American hangouts in Firenze and towards the city's more intimate, authentic corners.

The tablet magazine is a concept that melds the mediums of print and the web. With articles each presented on their own page, readers can swipe left and right from article to article and scroll smoothly down to continue reading. The tablet magazine, too, enables interactive technologies embedded within the text. In this issue, users can discover slideshows, video, audio, hyperlinks to the web, and an interactive map. As a tablet mag, *Strada* invites readers to engage and explore its pages, much as it advocates for students to do the same with their new city. It is also accessible anywhere in the world, without any extra bulk or baggage weight.

I created this issue using Adobe InDesign and its folio builder, which allows designers to build a magazine or ebook. By writing and importing more than fifteen articles based on my time studying in Florence, I was able to place each story on its own page and design around it with use of my own photography. I decided to create a smooth-scroll effect—the ability to view an article as one long, flowing image—by adjusting the size of each page, and I added interactivity with InDesign's animation capacities. Most of these skills were self-taught.

With the help of Newhouse, I was also granted access to use Adobe Digital Publishing Suite, where I could transport my folio to cloud storage and support by Adobe. Spiders, the web building and publishing department of Syracuse University's Information and Technology

Services, then enabled the magazine for view and download from the App Store on the existing Best of Newhouse app.

This publication fills a void in the market of travel magazines both print and digital. While many mags (*Travel + Leisure*, *Conde Nast Traveler*, *AFAR*, *Departures*) flourish as travel publications, they are all aimed at an older and presumably more experienced audience. *Strada* writes with the young student in mind, adhering to an editorial philosophy that considers their budget, their interests, and the voice that matches their own. While travel guides exist for millennials, this is the first magazine—especially the first interactive magazine—that is specifically geared for students.

Acknowledgements

Many, many people provided me with guidance and encouragement through the process of building this issue of *Strada*. Foremost, I'd like to thank my tireless advisor, Professor Melissa Chessher, who sat with me as semesters came and went to help shape this project. She steadied me in my shakier stages, even if it required pulling me into the office of other professors who could pitch in, and her insight allowed me to trust in my plan's potential.

My reader, Professor Sherri Taylor, generously agreed to help a non-design student take on an ambitious design project even though we had never met before, and for that I am endlessly grateful. With a sharp eye, she improved my vision—and more importantly, she backed it. Professor Seth Gitner allowed me to crash his office and his classes when I was hitting my most frustrating snags, and his support over my shoulder made this mag all the better. Professor Harriet Brown provided more than one cheery boost in a time when I doubted my capabilities.

I'm appreciative of my contributors: my warm roommate, Chiara Klein, whose moving essay about our home was the star of this issue; my photo-savvy friend, Jackie Barr, whose snapshot of gelato saved me from panic over a missing image; and my delightful exchange sister, Marzia Gherardi, who gamely lent her Italian accent to the magazine.

Most are lucky to have a set of parents, but I'm blessed to have two. First, my many thanks to my *mamma e babbo*, Alessandra Sanminiatielli and Michele Maglio, for giving me an affectionate Florentine home to call my own. *Vi voglio tanto bene*. And I am forever grateful to my parents, Brian and Diane Riccardi, for their limitless love and support. They are the reason I could travel to Florence and the reason I came back.

All'Altro Lato (On The Other Side)

A Reflective Essay

I. ON BINDING UP MY BLANKET

After conceptualizing and crafting, outlining and rearranging, writing and photographing and designing, I've come to view *Strada* as a project that connects the most important aspects of my scholarship at Syracuse University. For me, putting together this magazine has allowed me to take my experiences, collect them over my years spent here, and pull them all together neatly like the four corners of a blanket.

Bound up in this blanket are the studies I've progressed in for years. As a student in magazine journalism, I've become attracted to the intersect of culture and travel. With pushes from professors, I've learned to find compelling characters and forceful subjects, to transcribe their rich experiences into narratives that can be shared with others. I've plunged myself into publishing campus magazines like *Medley*, a culture and diversity magazine, which I began editing midway through my sophomore year; I've dived into working at national magazines in my summers. I've learned to assert my eye and my voice, my ideas and my chronicles as a writer. I have always been attracted to journalism because of what it offers to the curious—the

chance to become an expert on anything, to talk to people from any corner of the planet and distill what you've learned into works of storytelling.

But I also used this project as a means to carry in skills and interests that diverged from my program of study at Syracuse. Embedded in this magazine is my fascination with Italian culture and my desire to master its language, which I began studying on the side in my first year of school. Today, I'm a confident conversationalist. There was my desire to study abroad in Italy—a goal I placed on my self before I knew what field I might pursue or what university I might attend. There is also my love for design, my eagerness to interpret storytelling in a visual way. And while I enthusiastically took every chance I could to design logos and branding for organizations I've been a part of over the years, I had never put together a project as ambitious as a magazine book—especially not one that would incorporate interactive technology, moving and sliding and speaking facets of what I could create. And there is my interest in digital platforms, which present the opportunity to evaluate and revitalize what makes a magazine.

Back when I sat down with my adviser, Professor Melissa Chessher of the magazine department, to formulate a plan for my capstone, I wasn't sure what we would come up with. I knew that I wanted to create a cohesive package, to write and arrange related stories with some elements of my own visuals: perhaps in an art magazine about the Syracuse area, or maybe something having to do with travel. But while talking more and more about my anticipation to go abroad in Florence that upcoming semester—my excitement at putting my language skills to the test, my desire to diverge from other American students and really gain insight into Italian life there—it became apparent that a project about my Italian experience would be a passion-fueled means to unite my studies at Syracuse.

I wanted to discover a true Italy, I told her, and to share it with others. Often when I spoke with other students who spent a semester studying in Florence, I sensed that their experience was different from the immersion that I hoped for. Many students in the Syracuse University in Florence program don't take Italian class before leaving, relying on others' knowledge of English instead. They travel together and make new friends within the program. Some have articulated to me that, surrounded by a foreign place, they felt more secure in their American group. And although they engaged with the city while living there—its restaurants and coffee shops, its museums and churches, its shopping and sights—they didn't leave feeling like locals as they thought they would.

A project centered on Florence, then, would be a twofold service: an excuse for me to dig through the city in search of the best it had to offer, and a means for other students to share in these experiences. And so I solidified my plan: a city-centric magazine that would unearth intimate corners of Italy for American students. The prototypical issue I would write, design, and photograph—chiefly on my own, though I could look to contributions for other perspectives—would focus on Florence.

I realized, too, that a magazine like what I had conceptualized would fill a gap in the market. Typical travel publications like *Travel + Leisure*, *Conde Nast Traveler*, and *Afar* aim themselves an older readership. But their picks aren't of much use for younger travelers, those searching for budget buys and crashing from hostel to hostel. A long-term guide to a city on a student budget, while working in a magazine format rather than a book, could find a unique niche in travel mags and publications. And it would be a means to encourage my peers to discover new layers within their home in Florence.

In its very early stages, Professor Chessher suggested that my magazine not be a traditional issue as I had planned. While I'd considered gaining the funds to send it to a printing studio and give copies to SU Abroad for dissemination to predeparture students, she suggested that I work towards a more ambitious and emerging platform: a tablet magazine. The recommendation scared me. It would require more design, more complex coding, and thinking that pushed off of the flat page. This was a total amplification of scale. But with her encouragement, I agreed and began to consider drawing in videos, sounds and slides for the issue I hadn't yet written.

It wasn't until much later that I began to fully consider the tablet magazine as a match for my magazine's mission. The idea of the tablet unites traditional print media with emerging digitization, morphing two platforms into a hybrid that merits its own medium. Interactive magazines invite you to scroll and move through their pages, to touch and find. They draw in the senses: of sight, of touch, of sound. To page through a tablet magazine is to push through its stories and its sights. A reader is compelled to both physically and visually interact in more ways than when reading a traditional magazine.

The idea for *Strada*, truly, is to propel students through a Florence they have to search out—to compel them to move off American pathways and into corners of the city where authentic gems lurk. And so the format that it takes is one that requests readers to engage, just as they are encouraged to do with their city: to explore and discover in an unplugged medium.

II. IN PURSUIT OF ITALY

This project has emerged from my adoration for a culture that has always dangled like a fruit I can't reach. Italy has always existed as my Eden, the paradisiacal place where my origins lay. For most of my life it has lived only in stories, romanticized accounts of my roots that only amplify with each passing generation. Grandparents and great-grandparents, up and down my family line, pulled their family trees out of Italian farmland to bring overseas for opportunity. A great aunt, I'm told in a tale of mythic scope, siphoned the root of one of her beloved trees to bring to an American front yard, nourishing the new tree that sprouted figs like dark rubies. Such was my family's immigrant experience: resettled, replanted, but forever yearning for the soil from which it stemmed.

And so, though a generation or two removed, I have always been affixed to what we left behind. I grew up with snatches of Italy skimming around the edges of my home: recipes that were shared but never written, traditions that were followed but never explained, a language that was spoken but never taught. As a child, I spent much time with my grandmother, who addressed me in Italian. When I lost her, I also lost the last touchstone I had to my culture. Italy was folded into the fissures of my brain, seated and sealed somewhere in its creases. And so I resolved to study the language when I could in college, to pull the language stitched in my cerebellum out like a snapped thread.

Each semester, I took a new Italian course with the hope of moving towards fluency in the culture that captivated me. With every level I mounted, my capabilities, too, ascended. My tumbling r's smoothed into supple rolls; my shaky sentences flowed into melodic streams. My accent, too, coursed closer and closer to the language. Soon, my tutors told me, I didn't sound

American. And while I'd never convince a native that I was their neighbor, this was enough. My new tongue gifted me with satisfaction and fulfillment—and thrill. It felt rather not like a discipline I had worked at, but an art. *Quando parlo Italiano*, I began to tell myself, *canto*. When I speak Italian, I sing.

Living in Italy would be the realization of my reveries on many levels, and it wasn't just a means to tug up the roots of family both close and distant. It was an achievement at the intersection of effort and passion, the knowledge that my self-fueled education had gifted me with entirely new skills. Now Italian novels sit on my mantle; Italian news outlets dot my homepage; Italian music scatters through my iTunes library. I take pride in my diligence, in the fact that I can now hold conversations with Florentine baristas and my distant cousins who live in the Alps. Studying the Italian language provided me with many, many dazzling gifts—but the most profound of all was being able to recognize my fortitude, the journey I took in accomplishing my goal to speak Italian. It was the crystalline product of years of passion, of application, and of practice.

III. FINDING MY FIRENZE

Built up with these skills by the spring of my third year at Syracuse, I could confidently venture to Europe on the quest to attain my Italy. To me, there was no place better than Florence to do so: its tiny, romantic center packed with history and art, a city much-loved and much-lauded as a paradigm of Italian culture.

But when I arrived in Florence, I realized that this tiny city was packed not only with history: it was also brimming with American students. More than 45 American university and college programs are established in Florence alone, drawing thousands and thousands of students

to its heart each year¹. On average, that places more than one American program per square mile in the city². And with the students come a market for students. In Italy, breakfast is typically a sweet stuffed brioche (or what we might refer to as a croissant), but you can get a stack of pancakes at the American diner. In Italy, coffee is exclusively enjoyed at a café table or standing at the bar, but you can grab a Starbucks-esque plastic cup to go at the American coffee shop. In Italy, young people usually reserve their nights out for the weekend, but you can go clubbing any night of the week at the wide scattering of discos where every bartender speaks English.

It's so frustratingly simple to slip along the American surface of Florence, to engage solely with the tourist locales for three and a half months, especially because it is often the first option presented to students. Americanness exists in every sector of the city, a bubble within a bubble. As the weeks progressed, I began to realize that many of my classmates were living in Florence, but not Firenze.

The Italy my classmates roamed was not the Italy I had pictured. And so I took to the streets to discover my own Florence.

The saying goes that in the city center, all streets lead to the Duomo. That's because hundreds of years ago, as my teachers have told me, Florence was planned around its religious center: the baptistery, the cathedral, and later the Duomo. A number of the city's main roads, at least in the *centro storico* (historic center), spring from its heart. When walking in Florence, you'll frequently turn a corner and find the Duomo waiting for you. Even when you didn't plan it, it turns out that you were always making your way there.

¹ "AACUPI Member Institutions." *Association of American College and University Programs in Italy*. Association of American College and University Programs in Italy, 1 Jan. 2014. Web. 22 Apr. 2015.

² "Florence." *New World Encyclopedia*. Paragon House Publishers, 1 Jan. 2015. Web. 22 Apr. 2015.

For me, the street was an invitation to opportunity. Each day, often beginning from the Duomo, I planned to find a new road. I sent my feet down the streets with the express intention of getting lost. In that way, I'd find myself in new corners of the city: piazzas and alleyways, hilly climbs and curving descents. I liked building my own routines, especially because their regularity gently reminded me of the steady weeks I had been living in Florence.

But I was wary of wearing down the same paths for fear of leaving others unexplored. Venturing down new roads led me to new neighborhoods, and with new neighborhoods I found the quiet Florence I was looking for. There was the public library with a café that overlooked the Duomo; there was the calligraphy store run by a Florence-born, London-raised hand-letterer; there was the open-front crepe shop that handed me warm, jam-dripping cakes.

It seemed most fitting to name my magazine after the choice I made to get lost, a nod to the possibility that the roads represent. And so while wandering the streets looking for my city and my stories, I settled on *Strada* ("Street") as the name for my magazine. After a long day of exploring, searching and discovering this city, you may find yourself arriving home in very heart.

IV. CRAFTING MY MAGAZINE FOR SHARE

I had spent the spring of 2014 searching for my Firenze, writing snippets and snatches about my home as I saw it. I photographed every detail I could find, and I had compiled about a thousand shots to sort through. I would spend the next year writing my stories, then designing and testing an interactive publication.

Of course, the project itself morphed over time. I had set towards Florence with a tentative story ladder in hand, determined to fill more than twenty ideas with the faces and places

I found. I wanted to cover lessons in language idiosyncrasies and mannerisms, how to properly dress to look like a local, overlooked gems in the city's smallest museums, the best flavors of gelato to mix and match. Some stories presented themselves through my travels; others withered as I realized they weren't the right fit. Still others became the clear centerpieces of my issue, even if I hadn't planned for them before venturing to Florence.

And so on my return, I reorganized what material I had found no fewer than five times. I laid out sections for introductions to culture, food and art, shopping and attractions. And I set my sights on writing everything myself rather than culling contributions. Because the project was so personal, innately tied to my own journey in Florence, I wanted the guide to come from my perspective. Naturally, by taking on the task, I had to limit my ambitious list of ideas. I could feasibly fill a second issue with just the extra stories brimming in my mind.

But I drafted and redrafted, bringing tentative stories to Professor Chessher and Professor Harriet Brown, my magazine writing instructor. With diligence and frustration, I worked my way through fifteen stories and packages that I felt would best serve the needs of abroad students in Florence. They included pieces that included a quiz on Italian manners that differ from our American upbringing, a breakdown of the many ways Italians take their coffee, a Tuscan recipe for making fresh pasta, a reading guide for gathering background on the Renaissance, a look into a local artisan's workshop, a trio of perspectives on fashion in Italy and Florence alike, shared stories about the most meaningful souvenirs that other students had taken home, and a parting spread about the significance of travel.

I was certainly inspired by other magazines when determining the path of my stories. In style, I wanted to emulate the *Time Out* brand, especially because I had interned there the summer prior to my abroad experience. Working at *Time Out New York* blew open my concept

of travel journalism could be: a publication all about one city, finding endless layers and facets of the culture there to recommend. But I was also attached to the idea of experiential travel, like that covered in magazines like *AFAR*. This editorial philosophy hinges on storytelling in a way that doesn't just hit the attractions, but encourages readers to insert one's self into the niches of culture and everyday life.

In design, I looked to other new and emerging titles available on my iPad. I wanted to bring in something clean and accessible, something easy to use, but also something multifaceted in its interactive features. I aimed to reach collegiate millennials not only in style, but also in function. Though the tablet magazine might be a format that the general public is not yet familiar with, I wanted to appeal to students' facility with technology.

The issue, I determined, needed it to be intricate and sophisticated in its interactive capacities. On the day before this magazine was ready to hand in, I decided to put together a quick how-to video demonstrating its touchable dimensions—a late-game undertaking that was involved, but worthwhile. I also chose to include features like a hidden images that can be revealed with a swipe, photos that can be changed from black and white to color, an interactive map, internet hyperlinks to websites for businesses and products to buy, galleries, and most importantly, audio-enabled pronunciation guides in the margins of multiple stories. The last wouldn't have been possible without my Italian exchange sister, Marzia Gherardi, who graciously recorded files of her native accent enunciating each word.

Teaching myself to create and enable each of these features took more dozens of hours in the Newhouse labs and scrolling through Adobe tutorials than I'd like to admit. Thankfully, I had wonderful resources in professors like Seth Gitner willing to guide my mouse through features

that I was snagged on. I emerged from my clashes with InDesign all the more triumphant, with new skills and an ease with interactive design that I never would have otherwise acquired.

I was nervous to confront the roadblocks of working across an ocean from my subject. If any photos, quotes, or information for the magazine were missing, I couldn't simply zip over to Florence to grab them. Thankfully, my thoroughness and clear vision while abroad helped me to avoid this issue for the great part.

But once I was back, I had to get resourceful. When I wanted to secure advice about Florentine fashion, for example, I read half a dozen articles about the best small shops in the city and emailed ten of them in Italian; three doled out advice about dressing like a local for the issue. When I was missing prices for my favorite gelaterias, I sifted through recent photos on TripAdvisor to make out the menus. When I needed to talk to students from a variety of semesters about their experiences, I contacted the student representatives for S.U. Abroad in Florence. Though there are still facets of stories I would love to include in the mag if I had the means—for one example, a video of artisan Luigi Mecocci (“A Labor of Legno”) working in his shop—I’m satisfied with the scope my issue covers.

I was also lucky to have a few friends help me fill in the gaps. My abroad roommate, Chiara Klein, contributed her beautiful award-winning essay about our host parents (“The Ritual”) that makes me cry on each read. When I was short a photo for a story I couldn't bear to downsize (“Gelato Crawl”), my friend Jackie Barr generously sent me a shot that she took on her travels to the city.

Though I was initially worried that assigning myself a project to work on while abroad would pull me away from my experience in Florence, it became the best burden I could have placed on myself. I was been compelled to investigate the best of my city not simply to have for

myself, but to share with others. In Florence itself, I became a guide to other students with everything I had learned while searching out stories for this publication. I expressed my hopes for the guide I hoped to be—and the Florence I hoped to show—to future students in my letter from the editor.

They say that in Florence, all streets shoot from the Duomo. The city was constructed around its heart, and its roads ring its center like a dazzling arterial system. If you listen closely to the steps refracting off these cobbled streets, you can hear the rhythm that beats just below the surface—the pumping, thumping thrum of the city’s pulse.

I spent my days studying in Florence in its streets. Carrying my footsteps to and from my Duomo, I pushed through the vessels and veins of the city roads. It was in heading down new bends that I discovered what I considered a quiet, authentic Florence: intimate cafes, weatherworn city plaques, bambini and nonni playing in their piazzas. It was in trying to get lost that I found my Firenze.

It’s this Firenze that I hope to share with you, a student beginning to connect with their new city, so that you may be able to find and carve out your own Florentine niches in the streets. Take this guide to your new home, allow your ears to search out the pulsing song of the city, and hit the ground running.

What emerged at the end of a year and a half of work—that conceptualizing and crafting, outlining and rearranging, writing and photographing and designing—was a magazine that also felt like a scrapbook to a period of meaningful growth in my lifetime. Endeavoring through this project, too, pushed me to grow in new and fulfilling ways. I’ve pulled together my studies, my passions, and my skills, and now I can come away with the perfect parting project for my time as an undergraduate at Syracuse.

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Jacopo Tendi, Tuscan chef

Jane Zaloga, professor of art and architecture history, Syracuse University in Florence

Luigi Mecocci, Florentine artisan

Elisabetta Renzoni, owner, Flo Firenze

Matteo Querini, owner, Boutique Nadine

Giuliana Beccattini, owner, L' Abito Che... Vorrei

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Kara Gelber, student, Syracuse University

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Mona Fulambarkar, student, Syracuse University

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Jackie Barr (photography, "Gelato Crawl")

Chiara Klein (essay, "The Ritual")

Marzia Gherardi (pronunciation, "Firenze, Translated;" "Gelato Crawl;" "Cibo Bizarro!" "Florence 360")

STRADA

An aerial photograph of the Florence Cathedral (Duomo) in Italy. The large, terracotta-tiled dome is the central focus, with its white stone structure and arched windows visible. The cathedral's facade, featuring intricate Gothic architecture with pointed arches and statues, is seen from a high angle. The surrounding city of Florence is visible in the background, with its dense collection of red-tiled roofs and historic buildings. In the distance, rolling hills are visible under a clear sky. The overall scene captures the grandeur and historical significance of the cathedral and its urban context.

MAY 2015

THE COMPREHENSIVE GUIDE FOR
STUDENTS ABROAD IN ITALY

**BUONGIORNO
FIRENZE!**

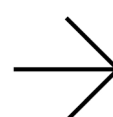
SEIZE THE DAY IN YOUR NEW CITY



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a presto

A NOTE FROM THE EDITOR



a piedi

They say that in Florence, all streets shoot from the Duomo. The city was constructed around its heart, and its roads ring its center like a dazzling arterial system. If you listen closely to the steps refracting off these cobbled streets, you can hear the rhythm that beats just below the surface—the pumping, thumping thrum of the city’s pulse.

*it takes a villaggio.
for their help with this
ambitious project, my
many thanks to...*

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MARZIA GHERARDI, PRONUNCIATION

AND THE ENDLESS FIORENTINI
WILLING TO SHARE SNATCHES OF
THEIR LITTLE CITY WITH ME.

I spent my days studying in Florence in its streets.

Carrying my footsteps to and from my Duomo, I pushed through the vessels and veins of the city roads. It was in heading down new bends that I discovered what I considered a quiet, authentic Florence: intimate cafes, weatherworn city plaques, *bambini* and *nonni* playing in their piazzas. It was in trying to get lost that I found my Firenze.

It’s this Firenze that I hope to share with you, a student beginning to connect with their new city, so that you may able to find and carve out your own Florentine niches in the streets. Take this guide to your new home, allow your ears to search out the pulsing song of the city, and hit the ground running.

Gabriela Riccardi

GABRIELA RICCARDI
EDITOR IN CHIEF



WELCOME



TO YOUR



city

BY THE NUMBERS

A brief breakdown of the students who head overseas for school each year.
SWIPE EACH BUTTON TO SEE THE STATS

NEARLY **ONE-TENTH**
OF UNDERGRADUATE
UNIVERSITY STUDENTS
STUDY ABROAD.



**STUDENTS
IN ITALY
ACCOUNT
FOR 10%
OF ALL
ABROAD
STUDENTS.**



**THE NUMBER
OF AMERICAN
STUDENTS ABROAD
HAS INCREASED
BY MORE THAN
16% IN THE LAST
DECADE, RISING
TO ABOUT 289,000
AT LAST COUNT.**

Italy is the
#2
most popular destination
for American students,
landing just behind the
United Kingdom.

ABOUT **30,000**
AMERICANS STUDY IN ITALY ANNUALLY.

SOURCE: Institute of International Education, Open Doors Report on International Educational Exchange (2014)



meet your ambassadors

Five students who have spent semesters in Florence share what drew them to the city.

SWIPE EACH PHOTO TO SEE IT IN COLOR



QUINN CARTELLI, HISTORY STUDENT. STUDIED IN FALL 2014.

On unlocking her heritage. "I chose to study in Florence because I've always had a desire to learn about my family's culture: the food, language and art that's rooted in me."



ANTHONY FISCHER, ENGLISH & TEXTUAL STUDIES AND HISTORY STUDENT. STUDIED IN FALL 2013.

On striving for a cultural connection. "Since I first started learning Italian, I've always had a fascination with Italy, so Florence seemed to be the natural place for me to study abroad. Beyond its history, I could also keep working towards becoming fluent there."



KAYLA GOLDSTEIN, INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND LINGUISTICS STUDENT. STUDIED IN FALL 2014.

On taking risks. "I wasn't entirely sure if I wanted to study abroad for my first semester of college—I know it's a little out there for most people. In the end, I decided to go for it, and I'm so glad that I did."



MATT TRIULLI, ARCHITECTURE STUDENT. STUDIED IN SPRING 2014.

On adding a new dimension to his studies. "For me as an architecture student, Italy has some of the most fascinating pieces of architecture from history, and being in Florence allowed me to have a springboard from which to see it. I'm grateful for it."



KARA GELBER, PUBLIC RELATIONS STUDENT. STUDIED IN SPRING 2014.

On becoming independent. "I love that Florence is a walking city. I really valued the fact that I could discover one side of the city to the other by foot."



FIRENZE, TRANSLATED

Dante’s Florence may have been the birthplace of the Italian language, but even a well-studied nonnative is bound to get tripped up in its words. Here’s your comprehensive guide to navigating Firenzisms.

COLLOQUIALISMI

Follow any conversation in Italian by knowing how to translate these key phrases.

TAP TO HEAR
PRONUNCIATION
(MAKE SURE YOUR
SOUND IS ON!)

- ▶ **THE PHRASE:** C’è la faccio.
LITERALLY? There is it I do.
ACTUALLY MEANS: I can do it.
- ▶ **THE PHRASE:** Che palle!
LITERALLY? What balls!
ACTUALLY MEANS: What a pain!
- ▶ **THE PHRASE:** Dai!
LITERALLY? Give!
ACTUALLY MEANS: Come on! or Stop it!
- ▶ **THE PHRASE:** Meno male.
LITERALLY? Less bad.
ACTUALLY MEANS: Thank goodness!
- ▶ **THE PHRASE:** Ti voglio bene.
LITERALLY? I want you well.
ACTUALLY MEANS: I love you, to a friend or family member. “Ti amo” is reserved for romantic love.

SAY THIS // NOT THAT

Avoid raising a few eyebrows by watching your Italian pronunciation.

Felice (adj): happy
Facile (adj): easy
“Sono facile qui in Firenze!”
“I’m easy here in Florence!”

Scoraggiare (v): to give up
Scoreggiare (v): to pass gas
“Credo in te. Non ti scoreggiare!”
“I believe in you. Stop farting!”

Anno (n): year
Ano (n): backside
“Vivo a Firenze solo per un mezzo ano.”
“I’m living in Florence for only half an ass.”

FIRENSLANG

Become a true Florentine by dropping the city’s slang into your sentences.

THE WORD: ‘Niamo or ‘Gnamo
COMES FROM: Andiamo (We go / Let’s go!)
SAY IT LIKE: NYAH-mo
USE IT LIKE: “Siamo pronti, ragazzi? ‘Gnamo!” (Are we ready, guys? Let’s go!)

THE WORD: Vènvia
COMES FROM: Vieni (Come!) and via (road / method / start / etc.)
SAY IT LIKE: VEN-vee-ah
USE IT LIKE: “Vènvia! Lo sai che non si fa.” (Come on! You know better than that.)

THE WORD: Badalo / Badala
COMES FROM: Badare (to look after, to take care of)
SAY IT LIKE: bah-DAH-low / bah-DAH-lah
USE IT LIKE: “Badalo quel pazzo!” (Look at that lunatic!)

TAP EACH WORD
TO PLAY ITS
PRONUNCIATION.

MIND YOUR MANIERE

MANIERE: manners
Have you mastered the nuances of good Italian manners? Take our quiz—and then take notes—on staying polite in Florence.

PASSEGGIATA: a walk
1) You’ve taken a long, leisurely *passeggiata* along the Arno for lunch and have just a few minutes to make it back to class. Stopping into a bar for a quick to-go sandwich, you take it via and head back into the street. Do you...
a) munch as you hustle down the block? Mmm, prosciutto and mozzarella.
b) wait to get into class to pull it out?

While you may be tempted to dive into a panino or *caffè* on the go, be aware that walking and eating is considered rude in Florence. Food and drink are revered in Italian culture, and they’re certainly things that merit a pause to enjoy. Sit on a bench in a piazza to enjoy your lunch, or stand at the bar to drink a quick shot of *caffè*.

2) You’re weaving through a crowd of people in the high-traffic Piazza della Repubblica, and you snag someone with your elbow. Do you...
a) turn and yelp, “Scusi!” before continuing through the mass?
b) say nothing and stride on?

Americans excuse themselves for everything: being in the way, moving around others, and touching other people. But the word “privacy” doesn’t exist in Italian. It’s fairly common to be in close vicinity of other people, sometimes what we’d consider an invasion of space, without acknowledging it in Italy.

TRATTORIA: restaurant, cafe
3) You’re just wrapping up a three-course dinner in a nice Oltrarno *trattoria*. The waiter comes to bring your table the *conto*, and as he places it on the table, he adds in clear English, “Service is not included.” Do you...
a) tip 20 percent? Hey, the guy’s got to eat!
b) pay the check and drop in a few euros for the free *grappa* he brought you to taste?

GRAPPA: a clear brandy made from the remnants of grapes pressed for winemaking

In Italy, tips are reserved only for exemplary service. Don’t let anyone imply otherwise: servicers are paid full-time wages without the expectation of tips. Tipping gratuitously, too, sets you apart as a flashy foreigner.



СІВО

CAFFÈ DECODER

SWIPE
EACH IMAGE
TO SEE THE
NEXT BREW.

For Italians, coffee is the crux of culture—a passion that's produced both rich flavors and dozens of varieties. But the endless options for how to take your *caffè* may leave you baffled. Before you hit the coffee bar, brush up on these five essential cups to try.



CAFFÈ

Don't be confused by the backbone of Italian brews: while we might know it as an espresso here, in Italy, the classic cup is actually a very small, very strong serving of coffee.



PHOTO BY JACKIE BARR

gelato crawl

Gelato is a distinctly Florentine tradition: while its 16th century-origins aren't precisely known, legend credits a *fiorentino*, Bernardo Buontalenti, with the luscious treat. We've found the top stops that stack the best scoops in town, no matter which neighborhood you may be exploring. But take note—since most shops shut down during the winter freeze, you may need to schedule your gelato tour after late February. [Tap the gelateria name to visit its website.](#)

TAP EACH WORD
TO PLAY ITS
PRONUNCIATION.

BIOLOGICO:
organic

CANNELLA:
cinammon

PINOLI:
pine nuts
MAIALE:
honey

SORBETTO:
sorbet

SESAMO NERO:
black sesame

NOCCIOLA:
hazelnut

THE CITY CENTER

You know the drill: when in doubt, head away from the city's most bustling streets for the best bites. But [Edoardo](#), set on the southeastern end of the Duomo, breaks all the rules when it comes to tourist-trapped piazzas. Serving *gelato biologico* from its open storefront, Eduardo's sleek interior—think dangling light fixtures, stainless steel finishes and a dainty curving staircase tucked in the corner—rivals its elegant gelato flavors. Try the spicy-sweet *cannella*, a perfect parting gift before you rejoin the crowds cluttering Florence's central attraction.

Piazza del Duomo, 45r; €2.50-5.00 for a cup.

PIAZZA BECCARIA

If there ever were a master gelato-maker in Florence, it would be Simone Bonini. The owner of [Carapina](#) created his flavors with modern gastronomy in mind, and his experimental flavors soar: mint and watermelon, pecorino and pear, and the Vin Santo, an exquisite scoop of dessert wine. The shop features a chart that outlines the month's seasonal flavors, and it makes for a handy how-to on grabbing the first rounds of *pinoli* or bidding goodbye to the last of the *maiale*.

Piazza Guglielmo Oberdan, 2r (with a second location at Via Lambertesca, 18r); €2.50-5.00 for a cup.

SANTO SPIRITO

We have our reasons for preferring the bridge next to Florence's beloved Ponte Vecchio, and it may just be because it leads us directly to this gelato stop. Located just a few paces into Oltrarno, [Gelateria Santa Trinita](#) highlights the best of the *vero Firenze*, or the side of town seen as the authentic city. You'll never tire of its succulent *sorbetto* or the creamy combinations of Italian classics like marscapone or hazelnut, but our pick is the delicate, nutty *sesamo nero*.

Piazza Frescobaldi, 11/12r; €1.80-6.80 for a cup.

FORTEZZA DA BASSO

Named for the first family of Florence, [Gelateria de' Medici's](#) selection matches its grand title. Overflowing with chandelier lights and floral-stuffed arrangements, the shop boasts both gelato-filled frozen fruit and decadent cakes. And while its location may be a hike from the center of Florence, this regal treat merits the journey. Try the *nocciola gentile*, a buttery hazelnut that's earned its noble moniker.

Via dello Statuto, 3/5r; €1.50-5.00 for a cup.

SAN NICCOLO

Wander around this young area at the base of Piazzale Michelangelo, and you might find yourself stepping into [Gelato di Filo](#), a tiny shop that has mastered silky scoops. The gelateria sits just across the street from an elementary school, so expect to see the counter clustered with children done for the day. Follow their lead and order creamy cassata, inspired by the Sicilian dessert filled with candied fruit.

Via San Miniato, 5r; €2.00-5.00 for a cup



LAMPREDOTTO

CIBO BIZZARRO!

Though renowned for its *pasta e fagioli*, its *schacciata*, its *tiramisu*, not all of the dishes of Florence have caught on outside of Tuscany. Explore enough eateries and you might face an offering for a course you may never have considered, from animal innards to moldy cheese desserts. Take these three dishes an invitation for gastronomical adventure—or as notice to stick with your *lasagna al forno*.

- ▶ **LAMPREDOTTO.** Though a roadside sandwich may be your idea of a welcome reprieve from a day of city traipsing, the Florentines have cultivated a different food truck culture from what you may expect. This spice-rubbed sandwich is filled with tangy, chewy meat—that would be cow’s stomach, slow-cooked and simmered in vegetable broth.
- ▶ **CROSTINI DI FEGATO.** This salty spread is ubiquitous on any antipasto plate or aperitivo spread, a staple for Florence appetizers. But what you might not know about the creamy brown dish is its idiosyncratic land-and-sea mashup: capers, anchovies, sage and chicken liver.
- ▶ **GELATO AL FORMAGGIO.** The Tuscans love their cheese—so much that it’s made an appearance in their sweets. Though likely not part of the gelato tradition in Florence, cheese flavors have started to sweep the shops across town. Our count so far? *Pecorino*, *ricotta*, *gorgonzola*, *grana*, and *parmigiano*.



be the cuoco

Learn to prepare the backbone of all Italian classics, fresh pasta, with this recipe pulled straight from a Tuscan kitchen. Jacopo Tendi, a chef based in Greve in Chianti, shares the best way to make pasta from scratch.

INGREDIENTS: 250g flour, 250g semola, 5 eggs, 15g extra virgin olive oil, salt to taste

1. Spread flour on countertop, leaving an indentation in the center. Break the eggs into this indentation.
2. Beat the eggs with a fork and gradually mix in the flour on the countertop while adding oil and a few pinches of salt.
3. As the dough begins to solidify and adhere to the fork, stop beating and begin to knead the dough. Remove hard pieces of dough and knead until the stickiness has given way to smoothness, about 10 minutes.
4. Use a pasta machine to further smoothen and knead the dough. Sprinkle flour on one side, fold the dough to fit the width of the machine, and roll it through the largest setting, taking care to keep the pasta from bunching.
5. Continue folding and rolling the pasta reducing the setting each time until it is the correct thickness (often, second or third-smallest setting).

JACOPO'S TIP:

Making pasta dough is all about touch. Once the dough is smooth, stop kneading immediately. Overworking the dough will make it too firm.



MUSEUM PRIMER

1. THE UFFIZI

There's a reason the Uffizi is considered one of the world's premier galleries: it stacks a vast amount of pivotal art works through Italian history, especially the Renaissance.

Hours: 8:15 am-6:50 pm. Closed Mondays.

Admission: Free with your museum card; €6.50 without

Must-see works: Endless. But a few of the most noteworthy pieces include Botticelli's Birth of Venus, Michelangelo's Doni Tondo, Da Vinci's Annunciation, and Titian's Venus of Urbino.

2. GALLERIA DELL'ACCADEMIA

This housing place of the David was constructed around the masterpiece, with a 360° display and airy skylight.

Hours: Tues-Sun, 8:15 am-6:50 pm. Closed Mondays.

Admission: Free with your museum card; €6.50 without

Must-see works: Michaelangelo's David, unfinished works from his Prisoners series.

3. THE DUOMO

A ticket to the city's most iconic landmark comes with access to all its surrounding attractions: the cupola, the Santa Maria Del Fiore cathedral, the baptistery, and the museum of the Duomo's opera. It's a tour through Florence's artistic histories: the baptistery is medieval, the cathedral Neogothic, and the Duomo a Renaissance token.

Hours: Each building has its own hours, but they generally run from 10 am-5 pm.

Admission: €10

4. THE BARGELLO

This former Florentine prison is now a national museum famed for its priceless sculptures.

Hours: 8:15 am-5 pm

Admission: Free with your museum card; €10 without

Must-see works: Donatello's David, Michelangelo's Bacchus, and Brunelleschi and Ghiberti's competition pieces for the Baptistery doors

5. PALAZZO VECCHIO & PIAZZA DELLA SIGNORIA

Alternately both the town hall and the ruling palace of Florence, the Palazzo Vecchio is filled with art-ornate rooms. The piazza it sits in, too, hosts some of the city's most eminent sculptures that symbolize the republic—it was the original location of the David.

Hours: 9 am-11 pm; Thursdays 9 am-2 pm

Admission: €10

Must-see works: Vasari's frescos in the Salone dei Cinquecento (though they replaced now-lost works by Da Vinci and Michelangelo), Giambologna's Rape of the Sabine Woman, Cellini's Perseus with the Head of Medusa

6. ORSANMICHELE

Though the building was once a grain storage room and then a church with a supernatural portrait of the Madonna, celebrated bronze statues sit in the niches of the great craft guilds of Florence's past. They've since been replaced by copies, but most originals are now inside.

Hours: 10 am-5 pm

Admission: Free

Must-see works: Ghiberti's Saint John the Baptist, Brunelleschi's Saint Peter, Dontaello's Saint Mark

SAN MARCO

2

GALLERIA DELL'ACCADEMIA

SANTA MARIA NOVELLA

3

ORSANMICHELE

6

THE BARGELLO

4

PALAZZO VECCHIO

5

SANTO SPIRITO

11

PALAZZO PITT

10

1

THE UFFIZI

7

Know nothing about the Renaissance? Have our handy guide steer you through the must-see churches and galleries in town.

7. SANTA CROCE

This gorgeous Neogothic church houses the Hollywood stars of the Renaissance: funerary monuments to Michelangelo, Macchiavelli, Galileo, Dante and more are there. Plus, it has famous frescoes by Giotto, father of the Renaissance.

Hours: 9:30 am-5:30 pm; 2 pm-5:30 pm on Sundays

Admission: €6

Must-see works: Giotto's Bardi Chapel and Peruzzi Chapel, Brunelleschi's Pazzi Chapel

8. SANTA MARIA NOVELLA

This Dominican church was the city's first basilica, home to groundbreaking Gothic and early Renaissance pieces.

Hours: 9 am-5:30 pm; 11 am-5:30 pm on Fridays and 12 pm-5 pm Sundays

Admission: €5

Must-see works: Masaccio's pioneering Holy Trinity in the Tournabuoni Chapel, Ghirlandaio's frescoes (with work by his young apprentice, Michelangelo) in the Strozzi Chapel, the Spanish Chapel

9. SAN MARCO

This religious complex restored by the Medici includes various early Renaissance works, plus later pieces created in honor of the aristocratic family.

Hours: 9:45 am-4:45 pm

Admission: Free with your museum card; €4 without

Must-see works: Fra Angelico's Deposition, St. Peter of Verona Triptych, and his San Marco Altarpiece

10. PALAZZO PITT

This palace, where the ruling Medici moved in the mid-16th century, is brimming with high Renaissance treasures. It also has sub-museums including the royal apartments, a costume gallery, and more.

Hours: 8.15 am-6.50 pm. Closed Mondays.

Admission: Free with your museum card; €8.50 without

Must-see works: Raphael's portraits such as La Donna Velata, Titian's Christ the Redeemer, Andrea del Sarto's Pieta with Saints, Caravaggio's Sleeping Cupid

11. SANTO SPIRITO

Brunelleschi's design for this geometric church is a testament to the ordered, harmonious humanism of the Renaissance.

Hours: 9:30 am-12:30 pm and 4 pm-5:30 pm

Admission: Free

Must-see works: Michelangelo's wooden Crucifix, carved when he was 17 years old

NOT PICTURED: SAN MINIATO AL MONTE

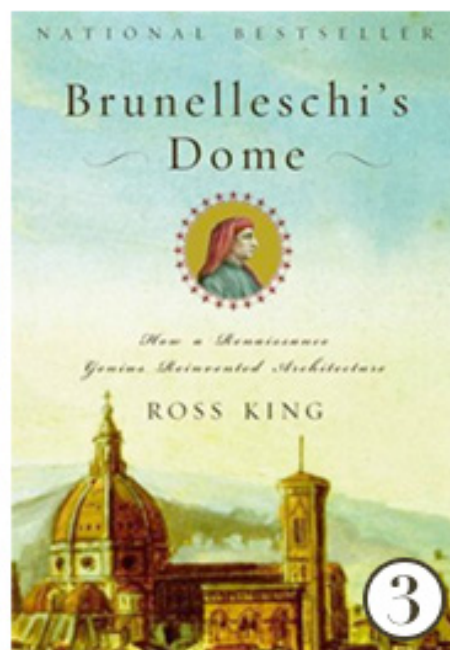
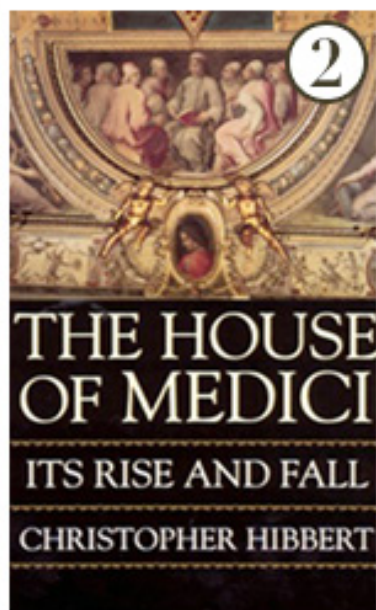
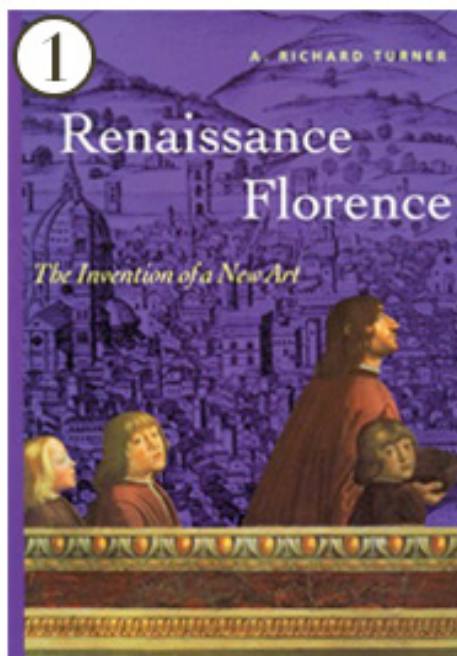
This medieval church's two-level structure is an achievement of Romanesque design. At Sunday and evening masses, the church fills with the otherworldly Gregorian chants of its monks.

Hours: 8 am-12:30 pm and 2 pm-7 pm; 8 am-7 pm Sundays

Admission: Free

Must-see works: 11th and 12th-century mosaics of Christ

TAP EACH IMAGE TO PURCHASE THE BOOK.



crash course in *classico*

You'll need to read up on the Renaissance before calling its birthplace home. Jane Zaloga, a professor of Florentine art and architectural history, recommends the best books for getting schooled.

1

RENAISSANCE FLORENCE: THE INVENTION OF A NEW ART by Richard Turner

If you can't tell *buongiorno* from Buonarrotti, this is the place to begin. Turner deftly drives through the transformation of art in 14th and 15th centuries, detailing the rise of the *Rinascimento* alongside its political, economic, and social implications.

2

THE HOUSE OF MEDICI: ITS RISE AND FALL by Christopher Hibbert

At times, it's impossible to separate Florence's artistic legacy from the Medici. As the dynastic, de facto rulers of the city, they were Firenze's commanding leaders—and its greatest patrons. The story weaves down the family line in a vivid chronicle of politics and power, one that attests to the enduring cultural influence of the Medici.

3

BRUNELLESCHI'S DOME by Ross King

Follow the extraordinary history of Florence's emblem through the feats of its visionary. No figure captivates quite like Filippo Brunelleschi, who overturned the notions of architecture to build his towering triumph.

4

MURDER OF A MEDICI PRINCESS by Caroline Murphy

Caroline Murphy's alluring narrative captures the drama of the Renaissance royal courts. In this rich recount of assasination, history surges like a cinematic thriller both seductive and sinister.



A LABOR OF LEGNO

MASTER ARTISAN LUIGI MECOCCI PRESERVES FIRENZE'S CRAFT TRADITION IN HIS OLTRARNO WORKSHOP.

IF YOU OPEN YOUR ARMS

while standing in the cobbled center of Via dei Velluti, stretch and spread and push out your fingertips, you may just graze the buildings that flank each end. The street is hardly wider than a wingspan, hardly longer than a few storefronts of grit-ground metal shutters and ironclad doors. There's no scattering of *motorini*, no people on foot. Your steps clatter off the stones and bound ahead between the tight walls, echoes clinking against the rusted doorknockers and silvery sealed ingresses.

A dusty glass window sits tucked away at the end of this street, and inside, a stooped man works with his nearly 80-year-old hands. Soft skin pulls taut as he picks up a cube of light wood. The wrinkled knuckles grip their wooden tooltip, fingers curling around the handle. The hands pinch at the cube, whitening with effort as he twists and secures it in a clamp. As they stretch and straighten, the furrows fade; the folds are lost. The supple hands are young once more.



TOP: LUIGI HIGHLIGHTS A WORK OF CARVED WOOD HE IS CURRENTLY GILDING WITH GOLDFLEAF. BOTTOM: LUIGI APPLIES GOLDFLEAF TO THE FINGERNAIL OF A STUDENT VISITING HIS WORKSHOP.

WELCOME TO THE SHOP of Luigi Mecocci, a faithful Florentine artigiano who has labored as a woodworker and restorer in Florence for more than 60 years. After studying under the renowned artisan Maioli, Mecocci grew to become one of Florence's masters.

Luigi often flips through a tattered emerald scrapbook of photographs, shiny soot-tinged shots of pieces he has worked on. He proudly points to a sculpture with ebony, known for its demanding delicacy. He pulls free a shot of a small table, scalloped and tiled and stamped on its square top. This one was for the Pitti Palace, a priceless relic he repaired for exhibition. Though retired now, he still comes in to his workshop to restore pieces for clients and museums who enlist his expertise.

ON VIA DEI VELLUTI, Luigi says, more than a dozen artisans once worked in their *botteghe*. In the last decade,

he's become just one of a handful. In a rapidly digitizing world, the skilled craftspeople, the artistic masters, the same people that fashioned the Florentine identity, are disappearing.

Luigi has no apprentice. Occasionally, a longtime friend will come in to help him with his projects, but Luigi labors alone. His company, instead, includes the people he invites into his workshop: local students, neighbors, writers.

"*Questi sono i miei mestieri*," he says, gesturing to the walls of hard-worn tools with those hands. These are his tools. This is his work. This has been his life, a life he continues each day through the dusty glass window. And with his supple hands, he'll bring back the old crafts, the mastery, the art that once made Florence great.

TOP: LUIGI'S TOOLS—"USE ONLY TO CARVE." BOTTOM: REFLECTED IN A MIRROR, LUIGI SPEAKS TO VISITORS.





SPESSA



When in Florence, dress as the Florentines dress. We asked local fashion experts for their takes on city style—and how to hack it.

ELISABETTA RENZONI, OWNER, [FLO FIRENZE](#). Flo is an upscale, fashion-forward concept store with a community focus: it feeds its profits into local and socially-conscious community projects.

La principale caratteristica della moda italiana e dello stile italiano è sicuramente quella legata alla ricercatezza: con questo termine intendo la volontà di scegliere con cura i capi da indossare, che siano originali, ma anche realizzati con tessuti di pregio e con una lavorazione ben fatta. Specialmente a Firenze dove da sempre c'è una cultura del capo sartoriale, questo aspetto è più che mai reale.

La moda straniera, sia europea che americana è sicuramente più informale, ma anche meno attenta alle caratteristiche del capo legate al tessuto ed alla lavorazione.

La moda fiorentina si differenzia per non essere particolarmente di tendenza, segue più alla ricerca di un'eleganza personalizzata, di uno stile ricercato che varia da persona a persona. L'amore per il capo unico e originale nasce da una cultura locale che ha sempre fatto prevalere lo stile alla moda.

Uno straniero che volesse vestirsi da fiorentino sicuramente dovrebbe visitare i piccoli negozi ancora esistenti a Firenze che realizzano piccole collezioni di abiti ed accessori prodotti localmente. Scegliere il proprio look, quello che più si addice alla propria figura ma anche al proprio stile di vita e scegliere capi ed accessori che esprimano al meglio le caratteristiche della persona che li indossa. Vestirsi sempre in modo originale e mai banale, sempre elegante anche se confortevole ed informale.

“The main characteristics of Italian fashion and of Italian style are definitely connected to refinement. By this I mean that there's a desire to choose which garments one wears with care—ones that are original, but also ones that are made with fine fabrics and workmanship. In Florence, where there has always been a tradition of small, boutique manufacturing, this aspect is more predominant than ever.

Foreign style, both European and American, is definitely more informal [than that of the Italians], paying less attention to qualities like fabric and production.

Florentine fashion distinguishes itself because it's not especially trend-driven. Instead, it's always in pursuit of a personalized elegance, a refined style that varies from person to person. The love for unique and original pieces comes from a local culture, one whose fashionable style has always prevailed.

A foreigner who wants to dress like a Florentine definitely must visit the little shops that still exist in Florence, ones that produce their small collections of clothing and accessories locally. Choose your own look—one that not only fits your figure, but also your lifestyle—and pick clothes and accessories that best express the personality of the person wearing them. Always dress originally and never be boring. Always be elegant while comfortable and casual.”



When in Florence, dress as the Florentines dress. We asked local fashion experts for their takes on city style—and how to hack it.

MATTEO QUERINI, OWNER, BOUTIQUE NADINE. Boutique Nadine is a shop brimming with charm: its wonderland-inspired pieces mix fresh designers and vintage accessories for women.

La moda fiorentina è senza dubbio molto ricercata e attenta. Si prediligono materiali naturali, come seta, cotone, lino. Solitamente le signore fiorentine sono sempre vestite in maniera elegante anche per occasioni informali, senza però essere fuori luogo.

Come dicevo prima sicuramente tutti i materiali naturali: lino, cotone, seta, canapa, cupro; per quanto riguarda i colori sicuramente il blu è sempre molto attuale, accostato con colori cipria come il rosa antico, il celeste polvere, il beige chiaro. In questo momento si ha una tendenza verso i tagli anni Venti, quindi la vita molto bassa ma larga negli abiti, che non si ferma sui fianchi e camicie di seta abbondanti e morbide che celano un po' ma rendono eleganti.

Se uno straniero vuole vestirsi come un fiorentino deve venire da noi! Sicuramente non devono portare shorts e infradito e studiare un po' di più il proprio look, evitando le grandi catene low cost!

“Fashion in Florence is without a doubt very studied and deliberate. Florentines prefer natural materials like silk, cotton, and linen. Generally the ladies are always dressed elegantly, even for informal occasions, without ever seeming out of place.

As I said, [the most popular textiles in Florence] are all natural: linen, cotton, silk, hemp, cupro. In terms of color, blue is always very current, especially when paired with dusty shades like antique rose, powder blue, and light beige. Right now, cuts inspired by the twenties are trendy. Very low, hip-skimming waistlines on dresses and soft, abundant silk shirts may be a little more buttoned-up, but they make the wearer look very elegant.

If a foreigner wants to dress like a Florentine, they need to come here! And definitely don't bring shorts and flip flops when you do. Study the right look, and avoid the big low-cost chain stores!”



When in Florence, dress as the Florentines dress. We asked local fashion experts for their takes on city style—and how to hack it.

GIULIANA BECCATTINI, OWNER AND DESIGNER, L'ABITO CHE...VORREI.

L'Abito is an Oltrarno boutique that exemplifies Florentine fashion with its clean lines and versatile options for women.

La moda italiana si differenzia da quella del resto del mondo per essere molto attenta allo "stile". Infatti noi italiani prestiamo molta cura sia all'abbinamento dei colori (che si armonizzano fra loro) che ai dettagli estetici degli accessori che abbiniamo all'outfit scelto. A Firenze si trovano la maggior parte delle case di moda che hanno fatto e fanno la storia del sistema moda, insieme ad altre realtà giovani, emergenti che si caratterizzano per la realizzazione di capi ed oggetti artigianali ma di forte impatto fashion: siamo conosciuti in tutto il mondo per la realizzazione artigianale e di alta qualità, sia per quel che riguarda il comparto abbigliamento, che accessori (borse, scarpe, etc).

Dal mio punto di vista, noi Fiorentini, amiamo in particolare uno stile ricercato e personalizzato, che miscela pezzi di brand affermati ad altri di stilisti emergenti. Uno stile che mixa capi casual, informali, con altri glamour e di forte impatto stilistico che rendono subito d'effetto l'outfit, il tutto però sembra buttato lì per caso. Tutto l'insieme risulta molto naturale ed elegante, non c'è niente che stona.

Per me ad esempio gli accessori sono sempre molto importanti: non si può sbagliare la scelta della scarpa, che deve essere sempre in contesto con il vestito scelto e con l'aspetto che gli si vuole dare (glamour, sportivo, casual, understated, etc); borsa ed accessori vanno quindi di conseguenza. Usiamo indossare scarpe allacciate, slipper o ballerine senza calze nelle stagioni intermedie, magari abbinate a jeans baggy e cappotti sartoriali. I cappelli anche trovano largo impiego nella moda fiorentina: molto noti sono i cappelli di paglia, di storica produzione in un paese vicino a Firenze, Signa, che oltre all'impronta fashion ci servono per ripararci dal sole nei torridi mesi estivi, quando si arrivano a sfiorare anche i 40 gradi con un tasso di umidità vicino all'80%.

Una cosa che pochi stranieri sanno su Firenze è che a Firenze si indossano prevalentemente scarpe basse perché la maggior parte delle nostre strade nel centro storico, sono pavimentate con sanpietrini che non agevolano molto la camminata con le scarpe a tacco alto, che indossiamo prevalentemente la sera. È una città che storicamente è stata pensata per il commercio e per la vita alla luce del giorno.

Seguiamo molto la moda, quindi colori e modelli cambiano con il cambiare delle proposte: penso che jeans, sneakers, abiti ricercati non mancano mai nel guardaroba di un Fiorentino.

Non uscire mai di casa senza aver curato il proprio stile, anche quando andiamo a fare la spesa, magari usciamo con un jeans e una t-shirt ma sempre tutto molto curato nella sua semplicità. Curiamo molto il nostro aspetto estetico: capelli, trucco. Facciamo sport quindi siamo attenti al nostro fisico e a quello che mangiamo. Consiglierei di esplorare le strade del centro storico alla ricerca di eccellenze artigiane che interpretano la moda attuale in un modo del tutto particolare...unico modo per conoscerlo è provare a farlo.

"Italian fashion marks itself from the rest of the world because it pays careful attention to style. In fact, we Italians take much care with combining colors (ones that coordinate together) with the aesthetic details of the outfits we choose. In Florence, you'll find that the vast majority of fashion houses that have made and make the history of our fashion system—along with really young, emerging ones—are characterized by the production of not only garments and artisanal products, but of impactful fashion. We are known throughout the world for the realization of artisanship and production of the highest quality, both in the clothing sector and in accessories (bags, shoes, etc.).

From my point of view, we Florentines particularly love a refined, personalized style that mixes pieces from established brands and emerging designers. It's a style that mixes casual, informal garments and more glamorous and high-impact style that makes an immediate statement—yet everything seems thrown together by chance. The overall effect is very natural and elegant, and there's nothing out of place.

For me, accessories are always very important: you can't go wrong in choosing shoes. They have to always match the context with your dress and with the aesthetic you want to emulate: glamorous, sporty, casual, understated, etc. Purses and accessories have to match. We wear laced shoes, slippers or ballet flats without socks in the milder seasons, sometimes combined with baggy jeans and tailored coats. Hats can also be widely found in Florentine fashion: straw hats historically produced from a town near Florence, Signa, are the most well-known. Besides being a statement, they shelter us from the sun in the hot summer months, when temperatures rise to 40°C and humidity levels come close to 80%.

Something that not too many foreigners know about Florence is that we usually wear flat shoes because most of our streets in the historic center are paved with cobblestones. They don't make it easy to walk in the high heels that we typically wear in the evening. It's a city that was historically thought of for commerce and life in the light of day.

We really follow fashion, and so our colors and patterns change with its shifts. But I think jeans, sneakers, and polished items never fail in the wardrobe of a Florentine.

[To dress like us,] never leave the house—even to go to the grocery store—without taking care of your style. You might go out in jeans and a t-shirt, but they should still be put-together with simplicity. We take care of our appearance a lot: hair, makeup. And we exercise and look after our figure and watch what we eat. I'd recommend exploring the streets of the old town, searching for excellent artisans who interpret trends with their own spin. The only way to do it is to try."



RICORDO



FIRENZE 360°

The best way to remember your little city? Trace a full vantage point around its best views.

**TAP EACH WORD
TO PLAY ITS
PRONUNCIATION.**

BIGLIETTERIA:
ticket office

WHERE? Top of the Duomo

HOW? Buy your all-inclusive 10 euro ticket from the Opera's *biglietteria* to gain access to the Cathedral of Florence, Campanile, Baptistery, and Opera Museum for 24 hours. But the unequivocal peak is Brunelleschi's greatest Renaissance glory: il Duomo. Climb 436 loping, sloping steps, watch for areas of narrow two-way foot traffic, and try to breathe easy as you circle a dome within the Dome—the architectural innovation that allowed it to be built in the 1400s. When you emerge at the top, your lungs will seize again, this time at the circular panorama from the highest point in the city.

WHERE? Orsanmichele

HOW? The top floors of Orsanmichele, a former grain storage room now housing important figures sculpted by Donatello, Ghiberti, Brunelleschi and more, are often overlooked by the Florence traveller. Get your ticket at the door, tip your head to the divine Madonna and Child housed by Orcagna's almighty tabernacle, then head up the stairs for a spectacular sight: the best free looks into the city center.

WHERE? Piazzale Michelangelo

HOW? Cross the river from the city center and head to San Niccolo to find a large-scale set of steps that curve off out of sight. When you emerge at their top, you'll find what looks like glorified *parcheggio* with a sage green replica of the David at its center—until you head to the piazzale's edge. The whole city spreads out before you. The view is best at dusk: as the soft acoustic chords of a street performer swell in the piazza, listen more closely for the enchanting hum of the city to reach your ears.

WHERE? San Miniato al Monte

HOW? While the climb to Piazzale Michelangelo may have exhausted you, conserve your energy for just a few more steps. This Romanesque church from the 10th century sits up a small hill from the piazzale parking lot and offers a larger panorama of the gentle Tuscan countryside. Bonus tip: if you quietly duck into the church any evening during the week, you can catch San Miniato's *monaci* chanting a mass in the dim medieval church.

WHERE? Fiesole

HOW? This little town was once an Etruscan stronghold and still holds a Roman amphitheater, but one of its best attractions lies on the horizon: its vistas of Firenze. Take the #5 bus from ATAF to head into the picturesque little town and spot the city from the other side of the Arno.

PARCHEGGIO:
parking, parking lot

MONACI:
monks



CHIARA HUGS HER HOST MOTHER, ALESSANDRA, ON PIAZZALE MICHELANGELO.

THE RITUAL

One student reflects on the moments she'll carry forward with her from Florence.

BY CHIARA KLEIN

IN OUR THREE OCTAVES, WE ARE A BELL CHOIR. AND ALL AT ONCE, THE HOUSE IS FULL.

THE RITUAL BEGINS every evening when my host mother Alessandra gets home from work. Sometime between 4 and 7 o'clock, the lock of the front door clicks twice, announcing her arrival. "Ciao, my girls!" her voice rings out, in that distinctively resonant Italian timbre, hers infused with British formality left over from time spent in England. From our respective bedrooms, my roommate and I call in reply. In our three cheerful octaves, we are a bell choir. And all at once, the house is full.

Then comes the period of waiting: I can manage to distract myself only in trivial ways as the minutes tick slowly and my stomach grumbles in cadence. I hear Mich shuffle to the bathroom and then back to lie on his bed as some unintelligible Italian TV show blares. I begin to grow restless when I hear the clattering of plates being set just across the hallway in the kitchen, and even more so when some rich, steaming aroma finds its way up the short flight of steps to my bedroom, settling around me and demanding my willing attention. I know the call will come any minute, and my anticipation grows accordingly. And suddenly, there it is: "Girls!... Mich!...*Pronto!*"

My roommate's door slides open, I thump down the stairs, Mich rolls over into his sandals and out into the hallway, and the three of us converge for an instant before descending on the brightly lit kitchen, happy victims of the Pied Piper's tune.

Chairs scrape back and we exclaim over the dish placed in front of us. Alessandra beams as she turns from the stove to the table to finish serving. We settle down and begin to blissfully entertain the cream-drenched gnocchi, or dense spinach lasagna, or intricately seasoned bean and rice soup before us. For a time, only the sounds of greedy forks bounce between the tiled walls. And then slowly we begin to look up, to meet each others' eyes, smiling as sauce drips down my chin or my roommate reaches for another piece of bread.

THE GROUP OF US CONVERGE BEFORE DESCENDING ON THE BRIGHT KITCHEN, HAPPY VICTIMS OF THE PIED PIPER'S TUNE.

"Com'era il tuo giorno, Mich?"

"Eh...bene, bene. E tu? Cosa hai fatto?"

There are always bits to offer, anecdotes that Alessandra loves to hear. Often times, our *babbo* just has to shrug as the three ladies gossip. But he usually gets his two cents in somehow, more often than not in the form of a cheeky American quip plucked from some ambiguous cultural vignette. "Yeah, baby!" and "Gorgeous!" are recurring favorites. Alessandra makes a face, calls him an idiot, catches our eyes, and bursts out laughing. Plates have been scraped clean by now, and we push our chairs to help clear the table. Before we withdraw to our rooms, we turn back to blow Alessandra a kiss and thank her. "Ma, for what?" she returns with feigned anger, before breaking into a smile once more.

Ritual is a term inextricably linked with Italian culture. The order bestowed on all things is not a matter of efficiency, or even merely habit, but is instead reflective of a reverence for life's consistencies. This is a reverence conspicuously missing in our native culture of total disposability. Experiences, social causes, iPhone editions are tossed before they even have time to gather a layer of dust.

Yet here in Florence, I have felt the wisdom and compassion of tradition, the deep calm that is born of routine. Almost as if there is a secret here, one nestled in window box gardens and hiding in the shadows of ancient cloisters, that we have missed while spinning our American hamster wheels. To have been able to participate in my own now-beloved realm of ritual has been one of the greatest joys of discovering my Italy.

TOKEN GESTURES

What will you take away from Florence after your time there ends? Students discuss their most valuable souvenirs—the pieces of Florence that they’ve brought home with them.

On my last full day in Florence, I met up with an Italian friend who I knew from an exchange program. We grabbed lunch almost every other day through the semester, speaking only Italian together. When we met at the Duomo—our usual spot—she was holding a gift bag. In it was a book of Italian expressions. To me, it was a continuation of my work in learning Italian and a symbol of our friendship. With it, she’d continue teaching me the language even after I returned to the United States.

—ANTHONY FISCHER, FALL 2013



My favorite souvenir from Florence is a golden coin ring I bought on Ponte Vecchio. I wear every day. The ring has the city’s stamp on it, and even when I glance down at it in class, I can’t help but smile and remember my semester in Florence.

—KARA GELBER, SPRING 2014



I SPENT SO MUCH TIME IN ONE STORE IN THE LEATHER MARKET THAT I ENDED UP BECOMING FRIENDS WITH ONE OF THE SALESPeOPLE, SASHA. WHENEVER I WEAR MY JACKETS, I’M REMINDED OF ALL MY GREAT MEMORIES IN FLORENCE!

—ABBY ROSENBLUM, SPRING 2014

The day before we left, my host parents gave me a postcard of the portrait *American Girl in Italy 40 Years Later*. It’s based off of a famous photo, *American Girl in Italy*. My host father’s brother took the photograph, and it became popular just as the original had. The retake was blown up and framed in our dining room, my host family often told us how much they loved the picture. Now I have my own. It was a thoughtful gift that reminds me of my family, and I’ll always cherish it.

—MACKENZIE SHERIDAN, SPRING 2014

My most important souvenir is a necklace our Italian teacher gave me on the last day of class. We all chose from a hat, and I got lucky with a beautiful pendent of the Medici crest. I wear it to remind myself of the rich memories Florence has given me and all the gracious people who have affected my life.

—MONA FULAMBARKAR, FALL 2014





CERTAINLY, TRAVEL IS MORE
THAN THE SEEING OF SIGHTS;
IT IS A CHANGE THAT
GOES ON, DEEP AND
PERMANENT, IN THE
IDEAS OF LIVING.

—MARY RITTER BEARD